IN THE ARCHIVE

# "Your Zine Changed My Life": The Impact and Legacy of Zines in *Sassy* Magazine

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ABSTRACT: The teen magazine *Sassy* (1988-1996) positioned itself as an edgier alternative to its competitors; underground culture, and particularly zines, were important parts of its identity. By featuring zines by young women and girls, Sassy made reading and writing zines accessible to its readers. This message was particularly powerful within the context of Sassy's larger project of encouraging readers to produce their own media. Yet as small-circulation, self-published works, zines are not intended for mainstream audiences, and some zine writers saw the magazine's interest as exploitative. This essay explores the consequences of covering them in a mainstream magazine for teen girls.

**Keywords:** girl culture, punk, underground culture, self-publishing, zines, teen magazines

*Sassy* (1988-96) was a short-lived but influential teen magazine. Often characterized as a more progressive alternative to its competitors *Seventeen*, *'Teen*, and *YM*, the publication garnered both admirers and critics for featuring frank content about sexuality, social issues, and current events, publishing articles that questioned celebrity culture and beauty standards, and championing underground culture. More than twenty years after its demise, it is still fondly remembered by readers and referenced in popular culture; in 2007, it was the subject of Kara Jesella and Marisa Meltzer's book *How Sassy Changed My Life*.[1] While much has been written about the magazine, no sustained attention has been paid to its coverage of zines, even though its

interest in these publications was significant, contentious, and has had an impact well beyond the life of the magazine. By taking zines seriously and highlighting ones written by girls and women, *Sassy* made them relevant and important to its audience. The magazine not only introduced readers to a medium they otherwise would not have had access to, but also inspired some to become zine makers. This emphasis on zines was particularly powerful within the context of the publication's larger project of promoting self-expression and empowerment. Yet as handmade, often intensely personal works, zines, by their very nature, are not intended for mainstream audiences, and some zine writers saw the magazine's attention as exploitative. This essay explores the relationship between *Sassy* and zines and the consequences of covering them in a mainstream magazine for teen girls.

*Sassy* was founded by Australian publisher Sandra Yates, who saw a gap in the American market for a publication like the irreverent Australian teen magazine *Dolly*[2] (Figure 1). While most teen magazines treated the reader as a problem to fix, *Sassy* encouraged personal agency and self-acceptance. Articles such as "Who Here's a Feminist?," "Why You Liked Yourself Better When You Were 11," and "You're Smarter Than You Think" demonstrate the magazine's commitment to empowering its audience. Readers responded: launched by Yates's Matilda Publications in March 1988, the magazine's circulation increased from 250,000 to 450,000 within its first year, and in October 1989, *Sassy* was acquired by the much larger Lang Communications.[3] Yet it also had a troubled start. Its first issue featured an article about teen sex that did not solely prescribe abstinence, which provoked the ire of Christian and conservative groups and resulted in the loss of advertisers, a problem that would plague the magazine for the rest of its existence.[4] In a 1990 article in *Mother Jones*, Peggy Orenstein stated that after the incident, "six of *Sassy*'s biggest advertisers (including Revlon, Maybelline, Noxell, Gillette, and

the ostensibly progressive Reebok) pulled their ads . . . The impact was catastrophic."[5] Although the magazine continued for several more years, this early difficulty meant a tenuous existence.

<FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>

One of the ways that *Sassy* differentiated itself from other teen magazines was its interest in underground culture. The magazine was a proponent of the unknown and obscure, covering independent bands, films, and comics. Zines—self-published works made for passion rather than profit—played an important part of this project. Small-circulation, often photocopied publications, zines are motivated by creative expression rather than financial gain.[6] They typically focus on niche subjects and are made by a single person or small group of individuals. In both form and content, they deviate from mainstream magazines. In her work on 1990s girl zines, Janice Radway describes them as "collaged pamphlets with chaotic, cut-and-paste layouts that defy linear scanning, sometimes resist traditional narrative sequencing, and even refuse pagination altogether. [They] explored subjects like environmental justice, sexual abuse, queer sex, and body-image problems, as well as everyday obsessions and odd tastes unacceptable to the print mainstream."[7] The origins of the modern American zine are often traced back to 1930s science fiction fanzines, with a resurgence during the rise of punk in the 1970s.[8] During the 1980s and 1990s, photocopying machines became both affordable and ubiquitous, enabling an unprecedented growth of the medium. Amid this expansion during the early 1990s, zines began to draw the attention of mainstream media.[9] Many commercial publications had a limited understanding or interest in zines but wrote about them to signal their own cultural currency and awareness. Zine writer Chip Rowe describes this phenomenon: "used to be nobody knew much about zines . . . Then, suddenly, zines became the back-pocket bibles of Generation X . . . Everyone, from the painfully hip *Details* to the stodgy *New York Times* to the 'Readings' section

of *Harper's* . . . crowned zines as the voice of something."[10] Some zine writers saw this coverage as inherently problematic given that zines "operate," as Sheila Liming has written, "with the central objective of evading—and, as a result, subverting—the engines and processes of mass media."[11]

It was within this context that *Sassy* became one of the first magazines to consistently give zines mainstream exposure. "Zine of the Month" (initially called "Zine Corner") launched in the October 1990 issue as part of "What Now," written by staff writer and later editor Christina Kelly. The two-page arts and culture spread included other regular features such as "Cute Band Alert" (a spotlight on an up-and-coming band) and "Sassy Glossary Definition" (introducing a slang term with an example of its usage; Figure 2). The column provided information about the zine and its creator, along with a cover image and a brief—often, but not always, positive—review. The opening sentence of the first column immediately set the magazine's attitude about zines apart from other mainstream venues: "As of now we will be reviewing zines, which, for those of you who don't know, are photocopied magazines by some of the world's most creative people."[12] It closed with a request to readers to send in their zines.

<FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE>

"Zine of the Month" included details about the cost of the zine and how to obtain it from the creator, putting readers in direct contact with zine makers. Writing on the challenges of seeking out zines in a pre-Internet era, Fredric Wertham noted, "you can only have access to the information if you know exactly where to look, by talking to the right people or happening across a flyer or a zine being sold at an event."[13] Most *Sassy* readers did not "know exactly where to look," nor did they have access to independent record shops and bookstores, music

venues, or other places one might encounter zines. "Zine of the Month," then, served as both an introduction and a point of entry to the medium.

*Sassy* was not only one of the earliest mainstream, nonmusic magazines to regularly cover zines, but also the first to write about them for teen girls. Many of the early "Zine of the Month" selections were publications by girls and young women. This is significant, as the media often characterized zines as distinctly male dominated.[14] In a 1994 issue of the zine *Ben Is Dead*, Darby Romeo criticized the mainstream press on this point: "What they continually lack the insight to mention is the number of zines that are produced by women and how women's participation in the zine world has contributed immensely to the rise of the format . . . they have helped move zines out of the music-only format to encompass a greater variety of topics and issues."[15] *Sassy*, however, regularly highlighted zines by female creators, offering a more expansive view of the medium, one that would resonate with its audience. Furthermore, many of the featured zines focused on the experiences and concerns of girls and women. The review of Sharon Chow's *Spit* mentioned that the zine includes "a tampon review section, rating four brands on absorbency and ease of insertion. I wish we had thought of that idea first."[16] The zine *Thorn*, by Kelly Martin, is described as addressing "the many concerns of the modern girl," including "street harassment, breast exams, discrimination against women by the health care professions, [and] domestic violence"[17] (Figure 3). Tina Spangler's *Femme Flicke*, about women in film, included "a profile of underappreciated film director Dorothy Arzner . . . the editor's musings about young lesbian filmmaker Sadie Benning . . . [and] an article on violence in movies and TV."[18] The column, then, made zines accessible and engaging by emphasizing ones created by readers' peers and featuring material relevant to their lives. Moreover, the reviews highlighted content that echoed the magazine's articles, such as "Be Your Own Health Care

Activist," "How to Fight Sexism," and "I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar," positioning the zines as a logical next step after reading *Sassy*.

Several "Zine of the Month" selections were associated with the Riot Grrrl movement, bringing the underground feminist punk ethos to a mainstream, adolescent female audience. During the early 1990s, Riot Grrrl grew out of a frustration with the punk scene's misogyny and a desire to create a safer environment at male-dominated punk shows. It encouraged young women and girls to make their voices heard, particularly by playing in bands, writing zines, and making art. Many who participated were in their teens and twenties and concerned with issues such as rape, domestic abuse, sexuality, and empowerment.[19] In mainstream media, music was portrayed as the primary vehicle of Riot Grrrl.[20] Yet zines were an essential part of the movement. More easily made and shared than music, zines were "the most common means of communication in the Riot Grrrl community."[21]

*Sassy* staff recognized a kinship in these publications in their championing of female agency and creativity.[22] The review of Allison Wolfe and Molly Neuman's zine *Riot Grrrl* noted the "righteous militant girl power message permeating each issue. It's very healthy and inspiring, especially the stuff on rape, the suffragettes, girls in bands and girls' bodies."[23] The review of Ramdasha Bikceem's *Gunk* praises the zine for including "incredibly thoughtful and inspired writing on many subjects," such as an essay on "the massive differences between being a white punk-rock outcast from society and being a black outcast from society" and a piece that reveals the disparities between "being a boy DIY-er and a girl DIY-er."[24] *Sassy* may have featured these zines because the magazine's staff understood that its readers were eager for more than what one mainstream magazine could provide. A 1992 *Chicago Reader* article about Riot Grrrl emphasized how deeply the movement's message spoke to *Sassy* readers: "After their zine was

reviewed in *Sassy*, Molly and Allison of *Girl Germs* say their mail multiplied overnight: 'We got hundreds of letters from teenage girls across the country . . . "I want to start Riot Girl in my town," they write from Oklahoma, Nevada, Alabama. "Your zine changed my life"'"[25] (Figure 4) For some, discovering the feminist writing of like-minded girls was a pivotal experience. While readers were passionate about *Sassy*, consuming the magazine was a solitary act that did not offer a way to connect with others. Riot Grrrl zines, by comparison, "were used to make friends and create social . . . networks."[26] Media and girlhood studies scholar Mary Celeste Kearney asserts that Riot Grrrl was "one of the chief catalysts for the dramatic rise of girl media producers in the United States during the early 1990s."[27] *Sassy* conveyed both Riot Grrrl's message and its publications to a national audience.

<FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE>

While "Zine of the Month" was the most obvious place to encounter zines, mentions of the medium could be found throughout the magazine, and they often underscored the idea that *Sassy* readers could be zine writers. A July 1992 article called "You Can So Be a Writer" included interviews with several young, full-time writers, noting that one got her start with zines. For readers interested in pursuing a writing career, the article "recommend[ed] starting at a zine or school paper or local newspaper."[28] A piece about the 1993 Sassiest Girl in America Contest—a competition intended to counter teen magazines' more traditional beauty contests by showcasing readers who were well rounded, accomplished, and socially and politically engaged—describes the fifteen-year-old winner as a zine maker.[29] The November 1993 issue included a notice about how readers could submit their own zines to an upcoming DIY festival.[30]

Why did *Sassy* feature zines? Christina Kelly has said that she began "Zine of the Month" in response to receiving zines in the mail, but undoubtedly there were other factors as well.[31] As

noted above, the magazine's interest can be seen as part of mainstream media's preoccupation with underground culture during the early 1990s. Scholars such as Mary Celeste Kearney and Avril Archibald also have argued that *Sassy*'s interest in zines was both a bid for cultural capital and an attempt to eschew commercialism.[32] The December 1992 issue had the phrase "Corporate Zine" on the spine, a revealing joke that spoke to this tension. Yet the magazine, unlike most mainstream publications, genuinely admired zines as a medium. After "Zine of the Month" was introduced, *Sassy* included a "favorite zine" category in its annual entertainment poll and with staff picks. The 1991 poll's definition of a zine privileged them over magazines, noting the latter's dependence on advertisers: "A zine is far cooler than some mainstream vehicle for advertising."[33] This comment recalls the backlash the magazine had faced from Christian and conservative groups after the first issue. Acutely aware of the need to appease advertisers to survive, *Sassy* staff recognized and portrayed zines as a desirable medium that offered freedom and space for experimentation.

*Sassy*'s interest in zines also must be understood within the magazine's larger project of encouraging creativity and self-expression. According to Kearney, the opportunities the publication offered its readers to submit content were virtually unprecedented in teen magazines, not having occurred since the earliest days of *Seventeen* in the 1940s.[34] Several regular columns featured readers' writing, including true-life stories in "It Happened to Me," poetry in "Stuff You Wrote," questions about life in "Help," about beauty and hygiene in "Zits and Stuff," and feedback on the previous issue in "Say What." The magazine offered additional opportunities for audience engagement in annual reader polls, the Sassiest Girl in America Contest, and competitions that prioritized creative work (such as fiction and photography). Irene Kosela argues that "by encouraging reader submissions, and by incorporating and referring to reader

content and input on a regular basis, *Sassy* showed girls that they could actively participate in something as remote and complicated as publishing a magazine, demystifying the process so that it became a real possibility."[35]

Most notable of the possibilities for participation was *Sassy*'s annual reader-produced issue. Kosela observes that the publication of these issues "demonstrates an attempt by *Sassy* to assume an equality between readers and the magazine . . . It comes 'closest,' through the use of non-professional writers and editors, to being the non-commercial, alternative publication *Sassy* so often [attempted] to evoke."[36] Turning the magazine over to readers for one issue each year was a radical decision. Scholars such as Kearney have noted that, historically, teen magazines, driven by their reliance on advertisers, have regarded readers as consumers rather than producers of culture.[37] Yet the reader-produced issue—like zines—disrupted this notion. In the first reader-produced issue in 1990, *Sassy* editor Jane Pratt explained the experiment as a response to popular demand: "ever since *Sassy* first came out nearly three years ago, we've been getting letters from readers saying they would love to have our jobs. Then, last spring, through a variety of motivations (like vacation time and vacation time), we decided to go ahead and give over one issue of the magazine to readers to produce."[38] The reader-produced issues of *Sassy* most clearly speak to an essential aspect of zine culture that Stephen Duncombe calls "emulation": "having readers become writers and writers become readers circumvents a fundamental tenant of the logic of consumer culture: the division between producers and consumers."[39]

Despite the magazine's advocacy of zines and zine making, the staff did not initially consider the consequences for zine writers of featuring their work in a mainstream magazine. Zines are "not intended for wide audiences, which is reflected in all levels and facets of production (handmade means they cannot be made quickly enough to supply large audiences;

content tends to be specific to certain communities/subcultures; distribution, and distributive efforts, are minimal)."[40] Consequently, writers like Charles Aaron of *Super Hate, Jr.* and Geoff Farina of *No Duh* could not afford to respond to all of the requests they received after being "Zine of the Month," as their zines sold for less than they cost to make.[41] When *Sassy* staff became aware of the problem, the August 1992 issue featured a "Zine Scandal of the Month," in which Kelly criticized writers who failed to send their zines to readers after receiving payment. Kelly's rebuke reads as oblivious to the nature of the medium: "So from now on, do not send me your zine unless you can deal with a huge response."[42] Later in the column's existence, Kelly selected "Zine of the Month" from submissions and spoke with the writer beforehand, but initially this was not standard practice. The zine *Cupsize* mentioned that zine writer Sarah Dyer had declined an interview with *Sassy* because of her frustration with the publication, saying that the magazine "has reviewed more than one zine without telling the editor and has consequently spelled the demise by sending unexpected mountains of orders."[43]

Furthermore, while *Sassy* was instrumental in introducing many of its readers to Riot Grrrl zines, the resulting attention was seen as damaging by some within that community.[44] Many Riot Grrrl zines and others written by girls and women were intensely personal and explored experiences with sensitive topics such as eating disorders, body image, sexual harassment, and rape. They were created for a relatively small and controlled readership. This is in part why archivist Lisa Darms has characterized the zine as a "privately public object."[45] Following the appearance of her zine *Jigsaw* in *Sassy*, Tobi Vail (also of the Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill) struggled to produce subsequent issues, uncomfortable with the scrutiny it had received: "I didn't ask to be in their stupid magazine . . . Didn't make *Jigsaw* for the general public . . . I made it for a specific audience."[46] In this context, the way that *Sassy* initially

featured zines was naïve and irresponsible, sometimes detrimental to the zine writers, and suggests a lack of understanding about some of the fundamental aspects of zine culture and its related communities.

Unsurprisingly, zine writers' responses to *Sassy*'s interest in the medium were mixed. Some were skeptical of the magazine simply because it was a commercial publication that, despite its best efforts, still seemed entirely too conventional. The compilation zine *Riot Grrrl NYC 5* included an essay by a writer known as KAKE who criticized the magazine's conformity: "their format of visuals is the same as all the other magazines with a female audience—thin, VERY attractive models and the 'Lose weight so boys will like you' advertisement in the back."[47] Others saw *Sassy*'s interest in zines as harmful to the writers and communities the magazine claimed to support. In the zine *Figment of an Imagined Nation,* the writer ANDE declared, "the Zine of the Month column is a good example of exploitation of the underground."[48] Yet not all zine writers disliked the magazine's zine coverage. Erin Smith, guitarist in Riot Grrrl band Bratmobile, cowrote the November 1990 "Zine of the Month" selection *Teenage Gang Debs*. Smith, who had interned at *Sassy*, believed "that friendly media like *Sassy* could be used to spread the Riot Grrrl DIY punk ethos to other young women."[49]

While *Sassy*'s zine coverage sometimes posed problems for the creators, it was overwhelmingly positive for the magazine's readers. Given that the typical cost of a zine was a dollar or two, sending away for one featured in the magazine cost little in terms of time, money, or ideological commitment. Yet the potential benefit to doing so could be substantial. For some teen girls who first encountered zines in *Sassy*, the experience of discovering publications created by like-minded peers was powerful. Dawn Bates and Maureen C. McHugh contend that zines "connect girls who feel isolated" and found in their research that community and

connection were two of the most frequently cited reasons girls gave for making zines.[50] For example, the creator of the zine *Cutie Pie* reflected, "I wonder where I'd be right now if I had never read *Sassy*'s zine of the month article and had never seen *Plume* and never would have written away for it, would I still be miserable pondering suicide?"[51] Some readers were inspired to create their own zines with the hope of having their creation become "Zine of the Month." A review of *Weetzie Bat: The Zine* mentioned that "the editors are new at making zines and first read about them in *Sassy*," making explicit the link between reading about them in the magazine and creating them.[52] Yuan-Kwan Chan, founder of the online Asian arts and culture magazine *Meniscus*, traced her desire to start her publication to the idea that it could be "Zine of the Month."[53] Such examples show that magazine readers did not simply hope to win a contest or be deemed physically attractive—opportunities for recognition typically offered by other teen magazines—but wanted to create and share their own work.

Although it is difficult to know exactly how many *Sassy* readers were compelled to read or create zines after seeing them in the magazine, numerous blogs, articles, and interviews with women credit *Sassy* as their introduction to the medium. Celia C. Pérez, author of the 2017 young adult novel *The First Rule of Punk*, which involves a zine-making adolescent protagonist, learned about zines in *Sassy* as a teen before going on to make her own.[54] Writer Jennifer Bleyer discovered zines through the magazine, which was an important first step toward to writing and finding community: "I recall with extraordinary fondness staying up all night in high school making zines with others from my local Riot Grrrl collective . . . I published my own zine called *Gogglebox* . . . [that] generated tons of mail from girls all around the country . . . For a young writer and feminist, it was an exhilarating experience."[55] Such examples speak to the magazine's

crucial role in helping young women pursue creative projects in a way that continued to be important into adulthood.

Easier to track is *Sassy*'s impact on third-wave magazines, including *Bust*, *Bitch*, *Hues*, and *Venus Zine*, whose creators have cited the publication as a direct inspiration, and all of which began as zines.[56] Emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s, these magazines were "known for covering independent music and culture, offering sharp-witted critiques of popular culture and politics, serving as forums for debating the dynamics of contemporary feminism, reclaiming activities like crafting and burlesque as empowering pastimes, and embracing sex, sex toys, and feminist pornography as powerful and pleasurable."[57] While *Sassy* was aimed at a younger audience, the link between the magazine's philosophy and these third-wave publications is clear. *Bitch* cofounders Lisa Jervis and Andi Zeisler had interned at *Sassy*, and Tali Edut, cofounder of *Hues*, had participated in one of *Sassy*'s reader-produced issues.[58] *Bust* cofounders Debbie Stoller, Laurie Henzel, and Marcelle Karp were avid readers of the publication and wanted to create an adult version of the magazine.[59] Amy Schroeder of *Venus Zine* commented, "If I hadn't read [*Sassy*] . . . I doubt I'd have started *Venus Zine*."[60] Unlike some zine writers who were frustrated with *Sassy*'s focus on—and what they saw as exploitation of—the medium, the creators of these publications did not see a sharp divide between zines and magazines. Instead, they began their projects small out of necessity but with the hope of having them and their audiences grow. For example, Zeisler recalled that while she wanted to write for magazines, "starting a zine seemed so much more accessible."[61] Furthermore, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, methods of producing publications had evolved, and "desktop publishing enabled [magazines such as *Bitch* and *Bust*] to move relatively seamlessly from 'zine to full magazine form.'"[62]

Even with the fierce loyalty of its readers, *Sassy* could not survive. In late 1994, Petersen Publishing, the owner of *'Teen,* acquired the magazine.[63] The *New York Times* article announcing the buyout noted that *Sassy* had grown to a circulation of 800,000 but was still "fourth and last in its field," trailing *Seventeen*, *'Teen*, and *YM*.[64] Petersen decided to overhaul the publication and fire the entire staff. Writing in 1995 about the magazine's content changes, Archibald stated that "few of the old departments exist in the new *Sassy* and overall, it is a different magazine. There is a much greater emphasis on fashion and beauty (including dieting) and on articles that profile the lives of designers, models, makeup artists, etc. There are fewer feature articles per issue and more entertainment news and gossip."[65] Angry and disappointed readers abandoned the magazine, and *Sassy*, having become virtually indistinguishable from its competitors, did not find a new audience. By 1996, *Sassy* ceased publication.

Despite its brief existence, *Sassy* was an important magazine and particularly significant in introducing zines to teen girls. Although "young people are rarely seen as agents in their own lives, let alone as producers of media themselves," *Sassy* presented zines in a way that showed this was possible.[66] By highlighting zines written by girls and women that focused on their experiences and concerns, the magazine rendered reading and writing them accessible and desirable activities. Coupled with broader messages of female empowerment and self-expression, the magazine inspired many readers to make their own zines and in the process changed the landscape of the medium. Even for readers who did not decide to write their own zines, *Sassy* provided the opportunity to recognize that girls and young women just like them were creating publications that their favorite magazine valued and admired. Venues in which teen girls can have their voices heard always have been limited. *Sassy*, which told readers they could write what they wanted and helped them connect with others like them, transformed its audience.

1. In 2017, *Sassy* writer Kim France asked readers of her blog if they had been fans of the magazine. The post received over one hundred replies from women who enthusiastically remembered *Sassy* as the one of the few venues where they saw themselves and could learn about life and culture beyond their own local communities. Kim France, "Were You a Sassy Reader?," Girls of a Certain Age, June 14, 2017, http://girlofacertainage.com/2017/06/14/were-

you-a-sassy-reader/. A few years earlier, in 2013, Sherrie Gulmahamad started a Tumblr blog devoted to the magazine that gained both fans and publicity. Lindsay William-Ross, Lindsay, "Meet the Woman behind a Tumblr Devoted to *Sassy* Magazine," LAist, August 27, 2013, http://laist.com/2013/08/27/meet_the_blogger_behind_sassyscans.php.

2. Kara Jesella and Marisa Meltzer, *How Sassy Changed My Life: A Love Letter to the Greatest Teen Magazine of All Time* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2007), 6.

3. "Stakes Sold in Magazines," *New York Times*, October 17, 1989, https://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/17/business/stakes-sold-in-magazines.html; Jesella and Meltzer, *How Sassy Changed My Life*, 37.

4. Jesella and Meltzer, *How Sassy Changed My Life*, 35.

5. Peggy Orenstein, "*Ms.* Fights for Its Life," *Mother Jones* (November/December 1990): 82.

6. Stephen Duncombe estimates 250 as the "average circulation" number for zines. *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* (Portland, OR: Microcosm, 2017), 15.

7. Janice Radway, "Zines, Half-Lives, and Afterlives: On the Temporalities of Social and Political Change," *PMLA* 126, no. 1 (January 2011): 140-50.

8. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 9.

9. Julie Chu, "Navigating the Media Environment: How Youth Claim a Place through Zines," *Social Justice* 24, no. 3 (1997): 71-85.

10. Chip Rowe, "What They're Saying about Us," Zine and E-Zine Resource Guide, accessed July 5, 2019, http://www.zinebook.com/resource/biblio.html.

11. Sheila Liming, "Of Anarchy and Amateurism: Zine Publication and Print Dissent," *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 43, no. 2 (2010): 121-45.

12. Christina Kelly, "Zine of the Month: *Cometbus*," *Sassy* (October 1990): 15.

13. Fredric Wertham, *The World of Fanzines* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 22.

14. Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 25. Mary Celeste Kearney, *Girls Make Media* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 142.

15. Darby Romeo, ed., *Ben Is Dead* 23 (1994): 43.

16. Christina Kelly, "Zine of the Month: *Spit*," *Sassy* (April 1993): 43.

17. Christina Kelly, "Zine of the Month: *Thorn*," *Sassy* (July 1993): 42.

18. Christina Kelly, "Zine of the Month: *Femme Flicke*," *Sassy* (October 1993): 44.

19. Lisa Darms, *The Riot Grrrl Collection* (New York: Feminist Press, 2013), 7.

20. The first mainstream publication to write a significant article on Riot Grrrl was the *LA Weekly* in July 1992, months after *Sassy* began featuring Riot Grrrl–related content. An article in *Newsweek* followed later that same year. In response to the continual depictions that misrepresented or trivialized the movement and its concerns, some called for a media blackout. Jesella and Meltzer note, however, that the blackout did not include *Sassy* (*How Sassy Changed My Life*, 77-78). For a history of Riot Grrrl, see Sarah Marcus's *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), and chapter 2, "Putting the Riot Back into Punk," in Rebekah J. Buchanan's *Writing a Riot: Riot Grrrl Zines and Feminist Rhetorics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2018).

21. Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garafalo, "Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from within," *Signs* 23, no. 3 (1998): 809-41; Christa D'Angelica, "Beyond Bikini Kill: A History of Riot Grrrl, From Grrrls to Ladies" (MA thesis, Sarah Lawrence College, 2009), 71.

22. *Sassy*'s discovery of the movement and its focus on these zines arose in part because of Erin Smith, who had interned at the magazine and was involved in Riot Grrrl. Smith was hired after Christina Kelly read her zine. Jesella and Meltzer, *How Sassy Changed My Life*, 76.

23. Christina Kelly, "Zine of the Month: *Riot Grrrl*," *Sassy* (February 1992): 39.

24. Christina Kelly, "Zine of the Month: *Gunk*," *Sassy* (February 1993): 47.

25. Emily White, "Revolution Girl-Style Now! Notes from the Teenage Feminist Rock 'n' Roll Underground," *Chicago Reader*, September 24, 1992, https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/revolution-girl-style-now/Content?oid=880507. Although Olympia, Washington, and Washington, DC—the respective homes of Riot Grrrl bands Bikini Kill and Bratmobile—became most closely identified as the centers of this movement, Riot Grrrl chapters (local groups that held meetings, events, and workshops, made zines, and organized shows) sprang up across the United States.

26. Buchanan, *Writing a Riot*, 98.

27. Kearney, *Girls Make Media*, 52.

28. Marjorie Ingall, "You Can So Be a Writer," *Sassy* (July 1992): 66-67.

29. Kim France, "Sassiness on Parade," *Sassy* (January 1993): 43-49.

30. Christina Kelly, "What Now," *Sassy* (November 1993): 47.

31. Jesella and Meltzer, *How Sassy Changed My Life*, 75-76.

32. Kearney, *Girls Make Media*, 77; Avril Archibald, "Talking Back to the Teenage Girls' Magazine: Reading, Writing and Selling *Sassy*, 1992-1994" (MA thesis, Carleton University, 1995), 106.

33. "1991 Entertainment Poll," *Sassy* (September 1991): 45.

34. Kearney, *Girls Make Media*, 138.

35. Irene Kosela, "Exploring *Sassy* Magazine's Role as a Pioneer of Social Media" (MA thesis, Texas State University, 2008), 34-35.

36. Kosela, "Exploring *Sassy*," 105.

37. Kearney, *Girls Make Media*, 292.

38. Jane Pratt, "It Happened to Me," *Sassy* (December 1990): 70.

39. Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 133-34.

40. Liming, "Of Anarchy and Amateurism," 132.

41. Jesella and Meltzer, *How Sassy Changed My Life*, 76; "No Duh," ZineWiki, accessed July 5, 2019, http://www.zinewiki.com/No_Duh.

42. Christina Kelly, "Zine Scandal of the Month," *Sassy* (August 1992): 62.

43. Sasha Cagen, ed., "Riot Grrrl," *Cupsize* 3 (1995), quoted in Darms, *Riot Grrrl Collection*, 310-11. This approach changed over time. For example, Marty Wombacher, whose zine *fishwrap* was featured in the November 1994 issue, recalled on his blog that Christina Kelly notified him in advance that the zine would be "Zine of the Month."

44. Piepmeier, *Girl Zines*, 236; Elizabeth Groeneveld, *Making Feminist Media: Third-Wave Magazines on the Cusp of the Digital Age* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 32.

45. Darms, *Riot Grrrl Collection*, 10.

46. Tobi Vail, *Jigsaw* 5, quoted in D'Angelica, "Beyond Bikini Kill," 72.

47. KAKE, "Who Is Choking and Dying?," *Riot Grrrl NYC* 5 (1993), quoted in Darms, *Riot Grrrl Collection*, 194.

48. ANDE, "*Sassy*: More Complaining," *Figment of an Imagined Nation* 2 (1992), edited by the Pillsbury Posse, accessed July 5, 2019, http://archive.qzap.org/index.php/Detail/Object/Show/object_id/561.

49. D'Angelica, *Beyond Bikini Kill*, 72.

50. Dawn Bates and Maureen C. McHugh, "Zines: Voices of Third Wave Feminists," in *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women's Movement*, ed. Jo Weger (New York: Routledge, 2005), 179-94.

51. Amy, *Cutie Pie* 2 (1995), quoted in Buchanan, *Writing a Riot*, 3.

52. Christina Kelly, "Zine of the Month: *Weetzie Bat: The Zine*," *Sassy* (May 1994): 42.

53. Yuan-Kwan Chan, "About *Meniscus* Magazine," *Meniscus*, accessed July 5, 2019, https://www.meniscuszine.com/about/.

54. "They've Got Moxie: In Conversation with Celia C. Pérez and Jennifer Mathieu," *School Library Journal*, October 10, 2017, https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=theyve-got-moxie-conversation-celia-c-perez-jennifer-mathieu.

55. Jennifer Bleyer, "Cut-and-Paste Revolution: Notes from the Girl Zine Explosion," in *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism*, ed. Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 42-60.

56. For more on this topic, see chapter 1 of Groeneveld's *Making Feminist Media*.

57. Groeneveld*, Making Feminist Media*, 34.

58. Groeneveld*, Making Feminist Media*, 26.

59. Piepmeier, *Girl Zines*, 104-5.

60. Jesella and Meltzer, *How Sassy Changed My Life*. Unlike *Sassy*, these independent magazines featured advertisements from small businesses rather than major companies. Jesella and Meltzer suggest that this gave them "the absolute freedom to say what they want," but it also avoided the problem of alienating readers by running ads that contradicted the publication's mission and content (116).

61. Heather Wood Rudulph, "Get That Life: How I Cofounded Bitch Media," *Cosmopolitan*, May 2, 2016, https://www.cosmopolitan.com/career/a57736/andi-zeisler-bitch-media-get-that-life/.

62. Leandra Zarnow, "From Sisterhood to Girlie Culture: Closing the Great Divide between Second and Third Wave Cultural Agendas," in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, ed. Nancy Hewitt (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 273-304.

63. Deirdre Carmody, "Petersen Plans to Acquire *Sassy* Magazine," *New York Times*, October 20, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/20/business/the-media-business-petersen-plans-to-acquire-sassy-magazine.html.

64. Carmody, "Petersen Plans to Acquire *Sassy* Magazine," 1994.

65. Archibald, "Talking Back to the Teenage Girls' Magazine," 170. Surprisingly, the zine column was retained for several issues following the rebranding, although it typically did not include information on how to acquire the featured zine, both circumventing the problem *Sassy* originally faced in promoting these publications but also seeming to defeat the purpose of

highlighting them. Jesella and Meltzer expressed skepticism about the zines featured after the relaunch, noting that one issue featured a publication by the skateboard company Foxy (104).

66. Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 72.

**Image Captions for 'Your Zine Changed My Life': The Impact and Legacy of Zines in *Sassy* Magazine**

1. *Sassy* magazine, October 1992.
2. "What Now" in the September 1992 issue of *Sassy*.
3. "Zine of the Month" review of *Thorn* in the July 1993 issue of *Sassy*.
4. Issue 3 of Girl *Germs*. Issue 1 was *Sassy*'s "Zine of the Month" in June 1991.

Images 1-3 provided by the author.

Image 4 provided courtesy of the Ohio State University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library.